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AgLearn Goes Live

On March 29th, 2004, Secretary Ann Veneman announced the launch of AgLearn, USDA's enterprise-wide Learning Management System (LMS). Secretary Veneman stated, "USDA is committed to unleashing the fuller potential of information technology for our employees and customers. The launch of AgLearn is another important deliverable in President Bush's initiative to expand electronic government to simplify and unify government-wide operations and leverage investments to eliminate unnecessary duplication."

The initial AgLearn rollout involves 7,000 registered users from 12 USDA agencies. Users have access to free online courses available on a government-wide basis through the President's GoLearn Initiative as well as any of the extensive libraries of courseware available for purchase through GoLearn.

USDA Chief Information Officer (CIO) Scott Charbo said, "AgLearn provides a common infrastructure for deploying and tracking USDA-specific courseware for use by employees, partners, and customers." Charbo also noted that, "USDA's Office of Homeland Security has already made plans to deploy two courses on this common infrastructure, and USDA's annual civil rights training will be available on AgLearn."

AgLearn currently allows student users to:

- Search and access free GoLearn online courses;
- Search and access additional agency purchased GoLearn online courses;
- Register and enroll in USDA instructor-led training;
- Search and access USDA online courses or reference material such as Civil Rights annual training; and
- View and run reports summarizing your own learning activities.

USDA training staff has access to the following features:

- Create other Administrator Users within the Agency Domain;
- Ensure user data such as passwords and personnel data are current;
- Assign training to users through their Development Plans;
- Require training be completed by a certain time;
- Create courses and certification requirements;
- Add agency custom courseware;
- Create online surveys/exams using AgLearn tools; and
- View and run reports summarizing students' learning needs and activities.

Future phases of AgLearn will allow users to create and manage additional functions for competencies, skill assessments, and certification programs. AgLearn currently only includes USDA employees, but later phases will allow other Federal employees as well as State and Local employees such as Wild Land Fire Fighters to use AgLearn. Contractors and business partners, such as

nutritionists, farmers and Rural Housing Loan Officers, will be given access in future releases also.

For additional information on AgLearn contact Cynthia Bezz, USDA eLearning Project Manager at (202) 694-0004 or cynthia.bezz@usda.gov. More information about Ag Learn can be found at <http://aglearn.usda.gov/>

USDA's eAuthentication Service in FOSE Top 10

On March 24, 2004, USDA's enterprise-wide eAuthentication Service was recognized as one of the Top 10 government technology services for customers at the FOSE 2004 Showcase of Excellence. FOSE is the longest running and largest government technology convention designed to bring government officials together with the private sector to discuss technologies that can further government efficiency and effectiveness. Government programs apply and compete to have their best practice technology solutions showcased in the convention. USDA's eAuthentication Service, which provides authentication services for applications for USDA and across the Federal government, was selected to participate in the Showcase as one of the Federal programs that most improved citizen services and the business of government.



Associate Chief Information Officer for eGovernment Chris Niedermayer, USDA GPEA Coordinator Nancy Sternberg and USDA eAuthentication Project Manager Owen Unangst preparing for the FOSE awards

USDA's eAuthentication service was the first enterprise-wide eAuthentication service in the Federal government, and it was the first Federal Department service to receive Level 2 credential provider status from the General Services Administration (GSA). A Level 2 qualification means that USDA's eAuthentication service meets or exceeds the government-wide security standards for protecting Web services and has been approved to provide passwords and usernames for Department applications, including the new online customer statement.

The USDA eAuthentication service, launched in October 2003, was re-released on March 10, 2004 with enhanced user features. The service now has 65,000 registered users and supported 600,000 logons to integrated USDA Web sites in February alone.

Approximately 90 new users register for the service each day. USDA plans to provide credentials to the entire USDA employee base by the end of summer 2004. This will increase the number of USDA users to over 100,000.

For more information on the USDA's eAuthentication Top 10 FOSE award, please contact the eGovernment Team.

USDA Launches Online Customer Statement

On March 3, 2004, Secretary Anne Veneman announced the launch of the new online USDA Customer Statement. The new application was unveiled at the 2004 Commodity Classic on March 1-4, 2004, at the Las Vegas, Nevada, Convention Center. The release of the electronic Customer Statement represents another step forward for USDA's efforts to organize and present information in a customer-centric fashion. The Customer Statement combines a wide range of information about a farmer's or rancher's business activity with USDA into a single, online report. Customers can access the secure, confidential report online any place, any time.



Chief Information Officer Scott Charbo, Secretary Anne Veneman, and Assistant Director of Communications Operations Larry Quinn (left to right) demonstrating the new USDA Customer Statement during an audio press conference in the newly redesigned USDA Visitor Center

Using the new Customer Statement, users may view:

- Participation and application status in various conservation programs;
- Payments associated with commodity and conservation programs;
- Information on farm loans; and
- Conservation plan and land unit information.

The Customer Statement provides customers with a secure format to ensure that only USDA customers can view their statements. In the future, the Customer Statement will allow farmers and ranchers to cross-reference their operations to maps using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology with overlays for roads, soil types, water and other geographic features. Additionally, the Statement will be expanded to include similar in-

formation from other agencies that provide services for these customers.

To view the USDA Customer Statement, please visit www.usda.gov and click on the Customer Statement button.

Investment Year 2006 Call Memo Released

On March 15, USDA's Chief Information Officer Scott Charbo distributed 'USDA Capital Planning and Investment Control – Portfolio Management', the Investment Year 2006 Call Memo to agency heads (available on the Web at www.ocio.usda.gov/irm/cap_plan/doc/IY2006CallMemo.pdf). This memo contains a list of action items for agencies to complete by March 31, May 3 and early July as part of the planning and budgeting process for Information Technology (IT) investments for fiscal year 2006.

Consistent with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance, USDA agencies will budget for the following:

- Presidential Initiatives;
- USDA eGovernment Smart Choice Strategic and Enabling initiatives; and
- Agency-specific eGovernment investments, as outlined in agency eGovernment Tactical Plans and eGovernment Strategy Reviews.

These actions support USDA's goal to continually reduce the number of IT investments through a planning and review process that may result in opportunities for investment terminations, consolidations or shared administration. Specific deliverables include new or updated OMB Exhibits 300, project plans, I-TIPS/WorkLenz updates and investment priority lists. The information and documentation will also be used during the preparation of the President's budget for FY 2006.

In support of the President's Management Agenda and USDA eGovernment Strategic Plan, existing and proposed USDA IT investments will be evaluated to ensure that Web-based and other electronic delivery channels are sufficiently considered.

Agencies are responsible for ensuring that the most recent version of their eGovernment Tactical Plan includes all appropriate eGovernment investments. Tactical plans demonstrate how each proposed investment will help meet the agency's mission, address priorities and support the overall USDA eGovernment Strategic Plan.

Investment planning activities should involve the agency's budget officer(s) and IT Portfolio Manager to ensure that all eGovernment initiatives are properly addressed in the FY 2006 budget submission.

For further information and assistance in planning for eGovernment investments, please contact Barbara LaCour (202-690-2118), Ronald Anderson (202-720-3409) or Dennis Egan (202-720-8546).

For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:

- **Phone:** (202) 720-6144
- **eMail:** egov@usda.gov
- **Web:** www.egov.usda.gov